

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani Sahab (may Allah Ta'ala protect and preserve him),
Vice President Darul Uloom Karachi

Memories

(Episode 17)

Since this was the end of the first academic year after moving to Sharafi Goth, our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) convened a three-day annual public gathering from 15-17 Shaban 1377H (circa 7-9 March 1958). I found some notes about this gathering in my diary, and after going through them I recalled some additional things, which will not be devoid of benefit InshaAllah.

Hazrat Maulana Athar Ali Sahab, Hazrat Maulana Shamsul Haq Afghani Sahab and Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Yusuf Binnori Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon them all) were especially invited for this gathering. Other prominent scholars of the country were also present. Two ex-prime ministers of Pakistan, respected Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Sahab and Ismail Ibrahim Chundrigar Sahab were also invited. The first day featured a talk by Hazrat Maulana Athar Ali Sahab, after which the late Chundrigar Sahab delivered a speech. Thereafter the foundation stone of the Masjid was laid. The first session on day two was presided over by the ex-prime minister of Pakistan, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Sahab. It was in this gathering that Bin Yamin, a Malaysian school mate who was studying here, and myself were told to deliver speeches in Arabic. I had jotted down a ramshackle speech and showed it to my Syrian teacher Ustadh Ahmadul Ahmad. He made necessary corrections and transformed it into a meaningful speech. And I memorized it by rote. Ustadh Ahmadul Ahmad also made me practice the manner of delivering it. It was a result of this practice that when I delivered the speech from rote memory, it sounded as if I was delivering it extempore. I wasn't even fifteen so the audience, especially Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Sahab, showered me with words of encouragement.

Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Binnori Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) delivered a speech in the next session and I still remember one thing from that speech. Describing the richness of Arabic language, Hazrat cited the example of race horses. He mentioned that from first place to tenth place, each horse in a race has a different name in Arabic. The horse winning the race is called سَابِق (Saabiq). Runner-up is called مُصَلِّي (Musolli). Third-place finisher is called مُسَلِّي (Musalli) or مُجَلِّي (Mujalli). Fourth-place finisher is called تَالِي (Taalee). Fifth-place finisher is called مُرْتَاَح (Murtaah). Sixth-place finisher is called عَاطِف ('Aatif). Seventh-place finisher is called حَفْظِي (Hifdhiyy). Eighth-place finisher is called مُؤْمَل (Mu'mal). Ninth-place finisher is called لَاطِم (Lateem). And tenth-place finisher is called سَكَايَت (Sakait). The entire crowd was left awestruck at the fluidity with which Hazrat called out those words. Hazrat simply enumerated the words, without any preparation beforehand, to display the richness of Arabic language. But the awe and amazement with which the audience listened to him gave me the idea, may Allah forgive me, that this is a good trick to capture the crowd. Consequently I looked up all these words in Tha'laby's *Fiqh Ul Lughah*, and also other similar words. For example, I memorized all the different words in Arabic for the different stages of sleep, and captured the audience in various gatherings, and

instilled awe among students while teaching Arabic literature. Later when I realized that this is pure *riya* (ostentation), I asked Allah for forgiveness and made myself forget all those words. To the extent that, not being able to recall any of the above names while writing this incident, I have taken help from *Fiqh Ul Lughah* to write them.

The morning session of Day Three of the gathering was chaired by Hazrat Maulana Athar Ali Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him). Another student was to deliver a speech but he was absent. Out of the blue, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Mateen Khateeb Sahab announced my name. I was dumbfounded, and plunged into the dilemma of whether to regurgitate the previous day's speech, in which case the reality of my speech having been memorized by rote would be exposed, or to deliver a fresh speech extempore, which I did not have the capability to do. To solve this quandary, I began my speech with the following words:

"أمرت أن أعيد كلمتي التي ألقيتها بالأمس' وليست ذاكرتي قوية و لكنني أحاول أن أعرضها عليكم كما كانت"

Meaning: "I have been commanded to repeat the speech I made yesterday. But my memory is not very strong. However, I will try to deliver it exactly as it was delivered yesterday".

My elders, Maulana Zafar Ahmad Ansari Sahab in particular, were much amused by these words. Anyway, I somehow saved face. The last session was chaired by Hazrat Maulana Shamsul Haq Afghani Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), and my elder brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafi Sahab (May his shade be extended) delivered a speech on the topic of compilation of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), which was a genuine speech and was much appreciated by our elders. The gathering ended with *Dastar Bandi*¹ after Maghrib.

We spent our holidays at home. I suffered from Typhoid for most of Ramadan, and when our new academic year began after *Eid* on 15 Shawwal 1377H, circa 5 May 1958, we were to study *Mishkat*, *Jalalayn* and *Sharh Aqa'id*. *Mishkat* was assigned to Hazrat Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him); *Jalalayn* to Hazrat Maulana Akbar Ali Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him); *Sharh Aqa'id*, and thereafter *Husoon Hameediyah*, was assigned to Hazrat Maulana Qari Riayatullah Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him).

Though I owe so much to all my teachers that I can never repay them in my entire life, the favours of Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), especially during my early education, and Hazrat Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) during higher classes, are more than others. Allah Ta'ala had bestowed upon Hazrat Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (May his secret be sanctified) a distinct penchant for research. If ever Hazrat had any doubts about the minutest of matters, he would remain restless until he got to the bottom of it. And what was remarkable is that he would involve his students in such investigations as well, due to which this trait was transferred to them as well. Besides learning the relevant topic from the book under study in class, students would also gain additional research-based knowledge. Among our lessons assigned to him, the

¹ Translator: *Dastar Bandi* is the ceremony in which certificates of completion are conferred upon graduating students of a Madrasa. An elder also ties a turban around the graduating student's head during this ceremony.

most important was of Mishkat Sharif, and being our first formal study of Hadith, we would attend it with much zeal and enthusiasm. Instead of giving long-winded and pointless speeches, Hazrat would correct the student's reading of the text, provide a clear explanation of its meaning, and would present a sifted summary of the relevant discussions in such an easy-to-understand manner that it would be easy to memorize it. Additionally, he would also mention pertinent points related to *Nahw* (Arabic grammar), *Sarf* (Arabic morphology), *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *Usoolul Fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence). And while explaining the lesson, or as a result of a question from a student, if a point worthy of looking into arose, he would immediately assign it to a student to investigate from a particular book. As a result of this exercise, the student would get acquainted with extra-curricular books, and would also learn the methodology of benefitting from them.

During class, Hazrat would often mention witty points from scholarly or literary texts, a few of which have come to mind now.

I heard this incident for the first time from Hazrat that Abul Ula Mu'arra, who was a famous poet from Syria and was renowned for his atheistic notions, wrote a poem objecting to the chopping off of a thief's hand. His argument was that if a person were to cut another person's hand, he would have to pay a *diyat* (blood money) of five hundred dinars of gold. But if someone stole one-fourth of a dinar then (according to the *Madhab* of Imam Malik) his hand would be cut. As a result, a hand was worth five hundred dinars in one case and one-fourth of a dinar in another. He thus said:

يَدٌ بِخَمْسٍ مِئَةٍ مِنْ عَسَجٍ عُقِلَتْ
فَمَا بِهَا قُطِعَتْ فِي رُبْعِ دِينَارٍ

"The *diyat* (blood money) of a hand is five hundred pieces of gold (dinars). Then how come it is cut for (stealing) just one-fourth of a dinar?"

Replying to this, Imam Shafi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) countered with the following couplet:

هُنَاكَ مَظْلُومَةٌ غَالَتْ بِقِيَمَتِهَا
وَهَهْنَا ظَلَمْتُ، هَانَتْ عَلَى الْبَارِي

"The former is a hand suffering from injustice, so it is valued highly. The latter is a hand perpetrating injustice, so it is worthless."

And Abul Fath Busti replied with the following couplet:

عَزَّ الْأَمَانَةُ أَغْلَاهَا، وَأَرْخَصَهَا
ذُلُّ الْخِيَانَةِ، فَافْهَمْ حِكْمَةَ الْبَارِي

"The honour attained from being trustworthy increased the value of the former hand, while the humiliation from being treacherous made the latter worthless. In like fashion, understand the wisdom of Allah Ta'ala."

One time Hazrat said: "Consider the *Sughra* (Minor Premise) "الْغُلُوطُ غُلُوطٌ" (The wrong is wrong) where its *Kubra* (Major Premise) is "وَالْغُلُوطُ صَحِيحٌ" (And the wrong is right). The conclusion of these two is: "الْغُلُوطُ صَحِيحٌ" (The wrong is right), which is wrong despite being the conclusion of Type A." Then he explained: "In this example the Middle Term is missing, because by "غُلُوطٌ" (wrong) in the Minor Premise, the meaning of this word is meant, while in the Major Premise, by "الْغُلُوطُ" (the wrong) the word itself is meant and not its meaning. Therefore there is no Middle Term here through which one could reach the conclusion."

One day, he said: "Explain the meaning of the following couplet."

ہست استثنائے مثبت منفي و از عکس عکس

شد "عليّ عشرةٌ إلاّ تواليّ" پنج تا

Exception from an affirmative is negative, and vice versa

As a result, "I owe except" follows until five

I somehow managed to understand the first hemistich that if we make an exception from an affirmative sentence then the exception is negative, and if an exception is made from a negative sentence then it is in the affirmative, but I could not make out the meaning of the second line. Hazrat explained that "I owe except" means that if a person confesses like so:

"فلان عليّ عشرة دراهم، إلاّ تسعة، إلاّ ثمانية، إلاّ سبعة، إلاّ ستة، إلاّ خمسة، إلاّ أربعة، إلاّ ثلاثة، إلاّ اثنين، إلاّ واحداً"

"I owe so-and-so ten Dirhams except nine, except eight, except seven, except six, except five, except four, except three, except two, except one" then it would mean that he owes five Dirhams, because each "except" in the chain would minus out all numbers except the number being excepted, which will give five as the solution.¹

Hazrat was once highlighting the importance of the rule "الأهمّ فالأهمّ" ("most important first") in teaching and propagating Deen, and in carrying out religious activities. In this regard he said that one of the reasons for Muslims being massacred by Tartars was that instead of facing this great tribulation facing the Muslim world with a united front, they were engrossed in internal disputes, and were busy in debating minor secondary issues among themselves. Hazrat said that a poet nicely put his observations as such:

جب چلی بغداد میں تاتار کی تیغ نیام

مفتیان شرع میں جاری تھی اک جنگِ کلام

ایک کہتا تھا کہ کوا ثابت و سالم حلال

دوسرا کہتا کہ کالی چونچ سے تا دم حرام

¹ Translator: The solution to this riddle will be provided in Episode 18

اُس زمانے کے مؤرخ نے جو دیکھا تو کہا
مفتیاں را مژدہ! کار ملت بیضا تمام

While the Tartars brandished their swords in Baghdad

The Muftis of Islam were busy in a war of words

One said "Crows are no doubt entirely Halal"

The other said "From beak to tail they are Haram"

When the historian of the time saw this, he said

"Congratulations to the Muftis! The Muslim world is doomed"

I also learned this from Hazrat himself for the first time that the difference between "وَسْط" (pronounced *wast*, with a sukun on the س) and "وَسَط" (pronounced *wasat*, with a *fatha* on the س) is that the former (i.e. "وَسْط") is the entire are between the two extremes of something, whereas "وَسَط" is the exact center-point between the two extremes. It is due to this that there is a famous saying about the س of وَسَط: إِذَا سَكَنَ تَحَرَّكَ: وَسَط. Meaning that when the س of وَسَط is *saakin* (literal meaning: still) then it moves, i.e. any place between the two extremes can be called وَسَط. And when it is *mutaharrik* (literally: moving, it denotes that the س has a *harakah* on it), then it is *saakin* (literally: still), because only the center-point between the two extremes can be called وَسَط. If anything deviates from the exact mid-point then it cannot be called وَسَط.

We also heard the following wise words of someone from Hazrat several times:

بزرگے رفت بخواب در فکرے

دید دنیا بہ صورت بکرے

!کرد از وے سوال: "اے دلیر

"بکر چونی بہ این ہمہ شوہر؟

گفت: "یک حرف با تو گویم راست

کہ مرا آنکہ بود مرد نہ خواست

وانکہ نامرد بود خواست مرا

زیں بکارت ہمیں بجاست مرا

Meaning:

“A pious man once saw the world as an unwed girl, so he asked her: “You have so many husbands. How come you are still unmarried?” She replied: “The reason is that real men did not desire me, and those who desired me were not real men. Thus, I’m still unmarried.”

I once narrated these couplets to my Syrian friend Dr Abdus Sattar Abu Ghuddah and also explained their meaning. He liked them very much, and since he also composes poetry himself, he translated them into a poem in Arabic as follows:

رَأَيْتُ فِي النَّوْمِ دُنْيَانَا وَقَدْ بَقِيتُ
عِزْرَاءَ، مَعَ أَتْهَى زَوْجٍ لِأَجْيَالٍ
فَقُلْتُ: مَا اسْرَرْتُ؟ قَالَتْ: إِنَّ مَنْ طَلَبُوا
صِنْفَانِ مَا غَيْرَ مَا كَانَ مِنْ حَالِي
ذُو عُتَّةٍ، أَعْرَضْتُ عَنْهُ أَنَا
وَذُو الْفَحُولَةِ، عَنِّي رَاغِبٌ سَالِي

It was also from Hazrat that I heard the two couplets which I later saw inscribed on the blessed *Rawdah* of the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him), and can still be found today. Hazrat mentioned that those two couplets were first recited by a Bedoin at the blessed *Rawdah* and were later inscribed onto the pillars of the grill:

يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ دُفِنَتْ فِي التُّرَابِ أَعْظَمُهُ
فَطَابَ مَنْ طَيَّبَهُنَّ الْقَاعَ وَالْأَكْمَ،
نَفْسِي الْفِدَاءَ لِقَبْرِ أَنْتَ سَاكِنُهُ
فِيهِ الْعَفَافُ، وَفِيهِ الْجُودُ وَالْكَرَمُ،

In short, Hazrat Maulana Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) would narrate many similar points and amusing anecdotes in class, which would not only be engaging for us students but would also broaden our knowledge.

It was during those days that Hazrat Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) trained me and my elder brother (may his shade be extended) in extracting *Fiqhi* (jurisprudential) answers from books of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Hazrat would give us a *mas’ala* (jurisprudential question) and instruct us to bring the relevant text from *Raddul Muhtar*. On the first day Hazrat asked: “If a girl marries without permission from her *Wali* (guardian) and without adhering to her *Kufu*, what is the ruling of this marriage?” We replied: “Hazrat! We have learnt this issue in our books, that the marriage takes place but remains suspended on permission of the *Wali* (guardian).” Hazrat replied: “It is for this reason that I’m asking you to find it in *Shaami*.” When I referred to *Raddul Muhtar* I learned that the famous ruling from Imam Abu Hanifah (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) is the same, but according

to Hazrat Hasan Bin Ziyad (may Allah's mercy be upon him) the marriage does not take place at all, and the *Muta'akhireen* (later scholars) have given Fatwa based on this.

In brief, in this manner Hazrat acquainted us with extra-curricular books of *Fiqh*, and also trained us in extracting rulings from them.

It was the graces of those respected teachers that gradually diluted our feeling of being away from home. Still, we would be looking forward to Thursday the entire week because it was on Thursday evenings that we would go home. We would depart from Darul Uloom after Asar and reach home around Isha time, and would return after spending a day and a night with our parents and brothers. I loved books from my childhood, and the favours and graces of my teachers had further increased this love. On the other hand, a sizable treasure trove of books from our respected father's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) personal collection was at hand at home. Thus on Thursday or Friday, after meeting my family members, I would intrude into our respected father's personal library and would spend the remaining time flipping through each book, to know what topic is this book about? Who is its author? And having scanned through sufficient part of it as to become acquainted with it, I would put it back in its place. And if, while flipping through its pages, a particular book caught my attention I would take a deeper look into it. As a result, I had memorized the location of each book, and whenever I needed to look into a particular issue in detail, I would easily locate the relevant book for study. Furthermore, I would also avidly select topics of interest from the weekly and monthly magazines which used to come to our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him), and would benefit from them when the opportunity arose.